can we treat this as a submission?

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From: **Pragna Patel** <pragna.patel1@btinternet.com>
Date: Wed, Dec 12, 2018 at 3:35 PM
Subject: RE: time sensitive feedback on fundamentalism work needed
To: Karima Bennoune <amirak67@gmail.com>

Dear Karima,

Here are my thoughts about the usefulness and significance of the Special Rapporteur’s work:

The Special Rapporteur’s work on cultural rights as human rights has been invaluable to the work of Southall Black Sisters. SBS assists black and minority women in the UK to assert their fundamental rights and freedoms that are increasingly under threat due to the rise of the religious fundamentalism and ultra-conservatism.  The  reports by the Special Rapporteurs have proved to be an essential resource to draw upon when challenging religious fundamentalism legally, politically and culturally. Analysing fundamentalism and its consequences using a human rights framework is increasingly necessary and integral to our efforts, especially in mounting effective legal challenges against fundamentalist practices that restrict women’s access to education and public spaces and their rights in relation to marriage and personal  autonomy. In the UK the growing imposition of austere dress codes and so-called Sharia ‘laws’ in family governance, together with the rise of faith schools and gender segregation in education, are examples of how fundamentalists in all minority religions have sought to exert power and control over women in particular.

To give a specific example: In 2017, both the current and previous Special Rapporteurs on cultural rights provided considerable expertise in a case involving the practice of strict gender segregation in a co-educational Muslim faith school in the UK that was run by a board of governors linked to Islamic fundamentalism. See  R(on the application of the Interim Executive Board of School X) v HMCI Education Children’s Services and Skills.

In this case, in which SBS and the organisation ‘Inspire’ intervened as interested parties, lawyers drew extensively upon the expert reports from both Special Rapporteurs  to  understand the connections between fundamentalist views on education and the use of gender segregation as a specific tool with which to disempower young Muslim girls. The expertise provided by the Rapporteurs assisted the lawyers in preparing legal submissions to the Court of Appeal highlighting the ways in which segregated schooling within a religious framework undermines the full development of girls. Their reports ultimately contributed to a successful outcome in which the Court endorsed the view that the practice of gender segregation within the religious framework of the school in question amounted to sex discrimination. Influenced by the Rapporteurs, the court also confirmed that the girls in this school had a right to have access to, participate in and contribute to all aspects of educational cultural life on an equal basis as the boys. Significantly, the expert reports provided by the Special Rapporteurs also enabled SBS to mobilise support and influence public policy on gender segregation in the educational context. OFSTED, the regulatory body for all schools in England and Wales has since been become emboldened in paying particular attention to the practice of gender segregation in schools and its associations with sex discrimination, gender stereotyping and notions of inferiority. None of this would have been possible without the work of the Special UN Rapporteurs on Cultural Rights. Their work is a source of strength and support for NGOs like ours battling on the front line.

I hope this helps?

Hope you are well. Things here as a manic as usual.

Best wishes.

Pragna